

ENERGY STREAMLINING TASK FORCE PROJECT SUMMARY

Name: West Elk Mine

O-6

Entity Proposing Project: Arch Coal, Inc.

Category of Project: Other (mine)

Brief description of project: underground coal mine; while mining has progressed deeper, coal quality increased but methane levels caused limit to production due to public safety concerns; have already built large ventilation system; intend to drill ventilation holes from surface to vent the methane, but need to gain access to surface, which is owned by Forest Service; next panel to be drilled to begin around January 2002 and wish to have surface drilling completed by then; desire to complete drilling before winter; achieved consensus with community and local environmental groups about need for surface drilling; Forest Service determined EA required instead of categorical exclusion, so if any negative comments received, will trigger 45-day appeal period

Agencies that must be consulted and agencies from which approval is needed:

Federal: National Forest Service

Reasons for bringing project to the task force's attention:

Emergency Declaration: approached Forest Service/CEQ about emergency declaration but told that would take significant amount of time and CEQ was unwilling to proceed with this option;

Recommendations: provide more flexibility in reducing NEPA requirements where controversy has been minimized/eliminated and where environmental impacts will be reduced; where emergency exists, minimize time to address emergency